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BONTOC IGOROT CLOTHING¹

By ALBERT ERNEST JENKS

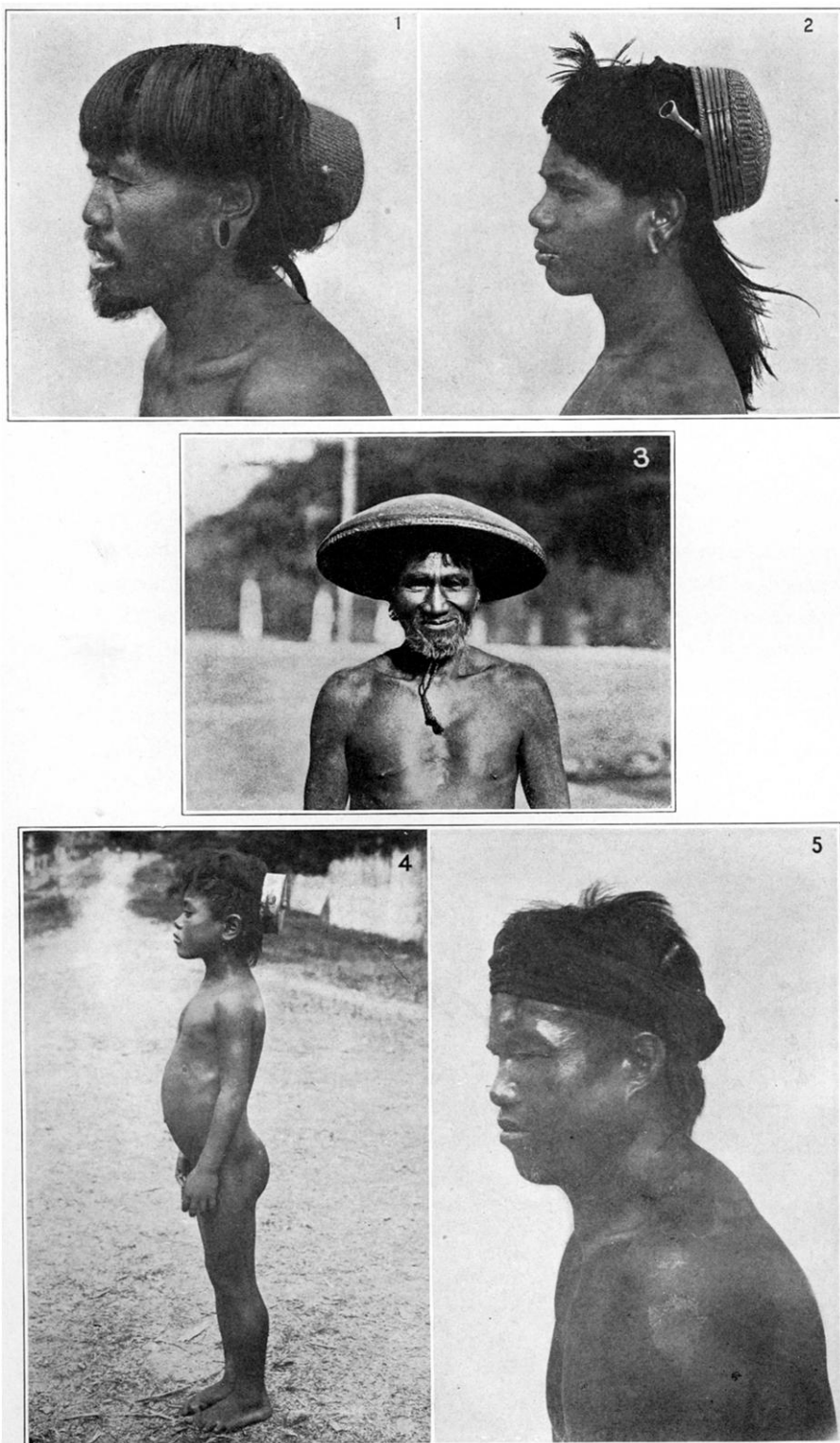
MAN'S CLOTHING

Up to the age of six or seven years Bontoc Igorot boys are as naked as when born (see plate XXIX, 4). At that time they put on the *suk'-lâng*, the basket-work hat worn on the back of the head, held in place by a cord attached at both sides and passing across the forehead and usually hidden by the front hair. The *suk'-lâng* is made in nearly all pueblos in the Bontoc culture area. It does not extend uninterruptedly to the western border, however, since it is not worn at all in Agawa; and in some other pueblos near the Lepanto border, as Fidelisan and Genugan, it has a rival in the head-band. The beaten bark head-band, called *a-pong'-ot*, and the head-band of cloth are worn by short-haired men, while the long-haired man invariably wears the hat. The *suk'-lâng* varies in shape from the fez-like *ti-no-od'* of Bontoc and Samoki, through various hemispherical forms to the low, flat hats developing eastward and perfected in the last mountains west of the Rio Grande de Cagayan. Barlig makes and wears a carved wooden hat, either hemispherical or slightly oval.

The men of the Bontoc area also have a basket-work conical rain hat; it is water-proof, being covered with beeswax. It is called *səg-fi'*, and is worn only when it rains — at which time the *suk'-lâng* is often not removed.

About the age of ten the boys frequently affect a girdle. These girdles are of four varieties. The one most common in Bontoc and Samoki is the *song-kit-an'*, made of twisted bark-fiber threads

¹ The Bontoc Igorot people are agricultural head-hunters who live in the village of Bontoc in the sub-province of the same name of the province of Lepanto-Bontoc in northern Luzon of the Philippine islands. The Bontoc culture area is in the center, geographically and culturally, of the entire Igorot area of Luzon. It contains about 75,000 people of the 300,000 or 400,000 who make up the "Igorot" or "Mountain People" who occupy practically all the mountain area of Luzon north of latitude 16° N.



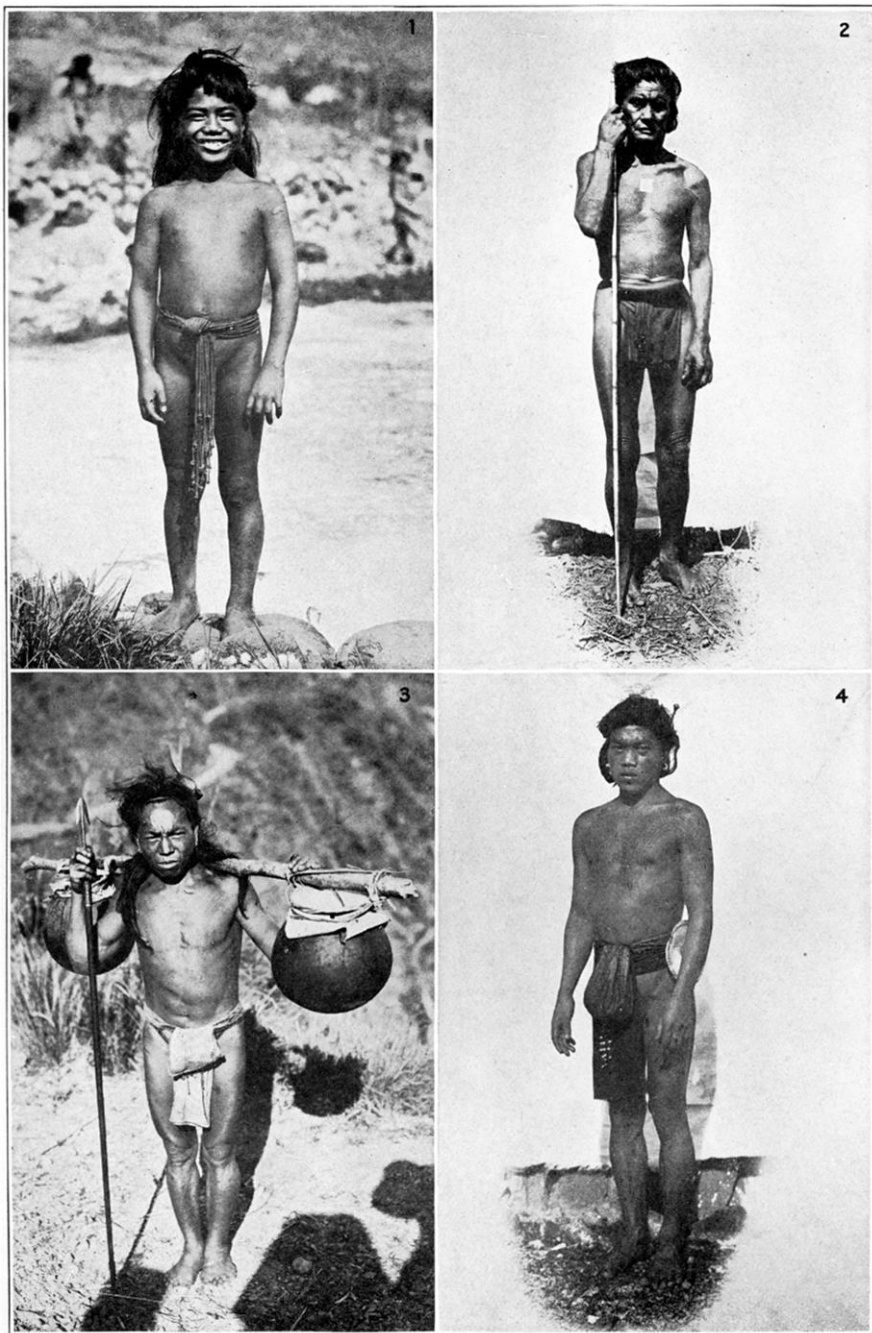
IGOROT HATS

1, 2, The pocket hat, the *ti-no-od'*. 3, The rain hat. 4, Boy wearing a tin butter-can as a hat. 5, The headband.
 (Photo by Martin. Courtesy of the Ethnological Survey for the Philippine Islands.)

braided into strings, some six to twelve in number and about twelve feet long; they are doubled and so make the girdle about six feet in length. The strings are the twisted inner bark of the same plants that play a large rôle in the manufacture of the woman's skirt. This girdle is usually worn twice around the body, though it is also employed as an apron, passing only once around the body and hanging down over the genitals (see plate xxx, 1). Another girdle worn much in near-by pueblos is called *i-kit'*; it is made of six to twelve braided strings of bejuco. In length it is constructed to fit the waist, has loops at both ends, passes once around the body, and fastens by a cord passing from one loop to the other. Both of these girdles are made by the women. A third class of girdles is made by the men; it is called *ka'-kot*, and is worn and attached quite as is the *i-kit'*. It is a twisted rope of bejuco, often half an inch in diameter, and is much worn at Mayinit. A fourth girdle, called *ka'-ching*, is a chain. Frequently it is a dog chain of iron purchased on the coast; oftener it is a chain manufactured by the men and consists of large open links of commercial brass wire about one-sixth of an inch in diameter. It is worn by the woman on the left in plate xxxi, 1. This woman is unmarried, and I presume the girdle she wears is the temporarily stolen property of some young man she is trying to allure to the *o'-lâg*, the place of "trial marriage."

At about the age of puberty, say at fifteen, it is usual for the boy to possess a breech-cloth, or *wa'-nis*. However, the cloth is worn by a large percentage of men in Bontoc and Samoki, not as a breech-cloth, but tucked under the girdle and hanging in front simply as an apron. Within the Bontoc area fully fifty percent of the men wear the breech-cloth simply as an apron (see plate xxx, 2).

There are several varieties of breech-cloths in the area. The simplest of these is of flayed tree bark, both white and reddish-brown, and sometimes the white ones are colored with red ocher. It is made by women extensively in the Bontoc culture area. Some of the other breech-cloths are woven of cotton thread by the women. Much of this cotton is said to be the tree cotton which the Igorot themselves gather, spin, and weave. Much also comes in trade from the Christian Ilokano at the coast. Some is purchased



IGOROT BREECH COVERINGS

- 1, The girdle, *song-kit-an'*. 2, Man wearing breech-cloth as an apron. 3, Man wearing cloth bag as an apron. 4, Man wearing the bladder bag. (Photo by Martin. Courtesy of the Ethnological Survey for the Philippine Islands.)

in the boll, and some is purchased after it has been spun and colored. Many breech-cloths are now bought ready-made from the Ilokano.

Men generally carry a bag tucked in the girdle, and very often these bags are worn in lieu of the breech-cloth apron — the girdle and the bag-apron being the only clothing (see plate xxx, 3, 4). One of the bags commonly worn is the *fi-chong'*, the bladder of the hog or carabao; another is *ka'-tat*, the bladder of the deer; the other, *cho'-kao*, is a cloth bag some eight inches wide and fifteen long. These cloth bags are woven in most of the pueblos where the breech-cloth is made.

Old men now and then wear a blanket, *pi'-tay*, but the younger men never do; they say blankets are for the women.

Some few of the principal men in many of the pueblos throughout the area have in late years acquired either the army blue woolen shirt, a cotton shirt, or a thin coat; and these they wear during the cold rain and wind storms of January and February, and on special social occasions.

During the period of preparing the soil for transplanting rice the men frequently wear nothing at the middle except the girdle.

In and out of the pueblo they work carrying loads of manure from the hog-pens to the fields, as little concerned or noticed as though they wore their breech-cloth.

All the Igorot, men, women, and children, sleep without breech-cloth, skirt, or jacket. If a woman owns a blanket, she may use it as a covering when the nights are cold. All wear a basket-work night-cap, called *kut'-lao*; it is made to fit closely on the head and has a small opening at the top. It may be worn to keep the hair from snarling, though I was unable to get any reason from the Igorot for its use, save the common explanation that it was worn by their ancestors.

WOMAN'S CLOTHING

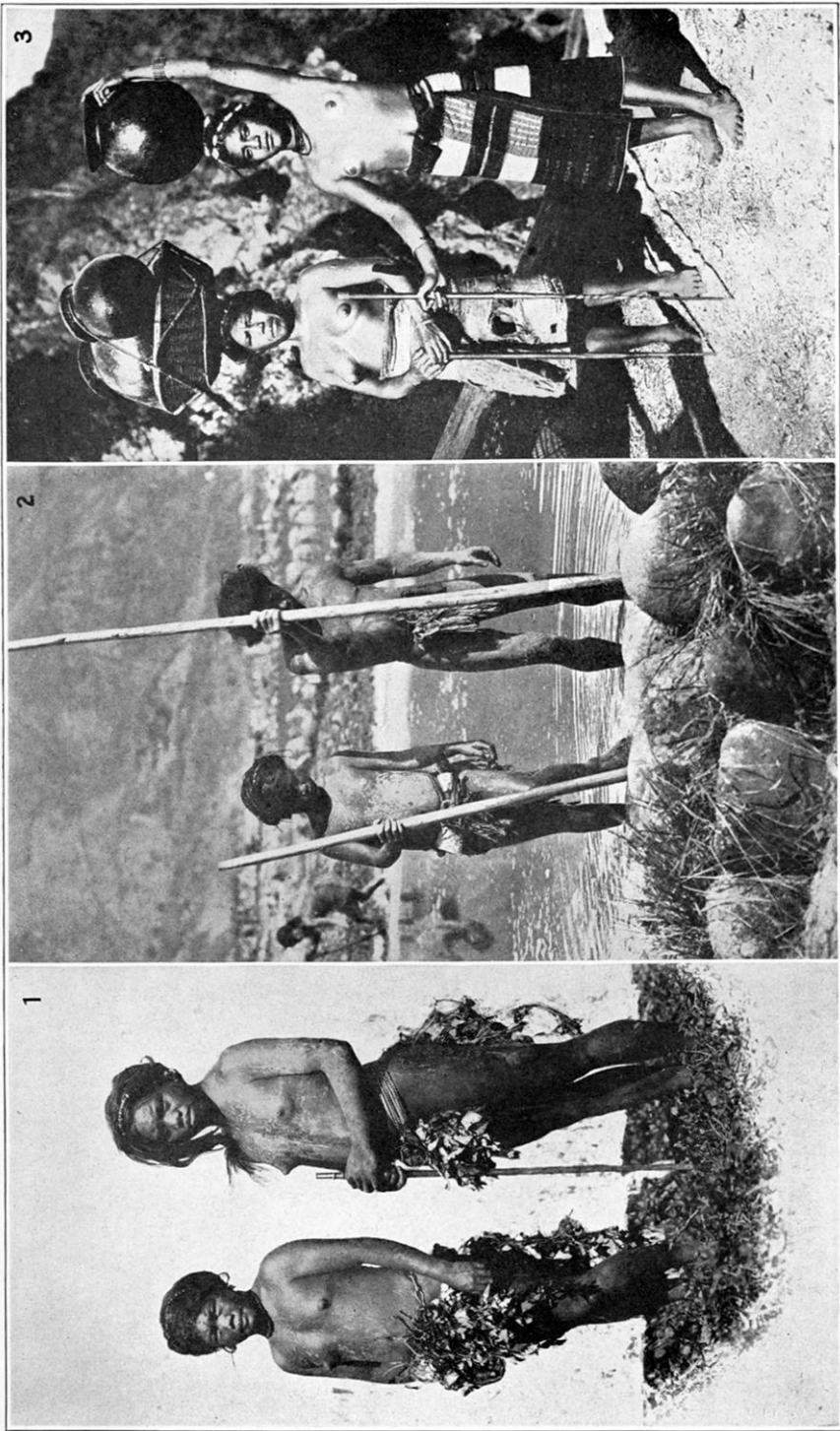
From infancy to the age of eight and very often ten years the little girls are naked; not infrequently one sees about the pueblo a girl of a dozen years entirely nude. However, practically all girls from about five years, and also all women, have blankets which are worn when it is cold, as it almost invariably is after sunset, though

no pretence is made to cover their nakedness with them. During the day this *pi'-tay*, or blanket, is seldom worn except in the dance; I have never seen women or girls dance without it (see plate xxxii, 1). The blankets of the girls are usually small and white with a blue stripe down each side and through the middle; they are called *kûd-pas'*. In Barlig, Agawa, and Tulubin the flayed tree-bark blanket is worn; and in Kambulo, east of Barlig, woven bark-fiber blankets are made which sometimes come to Bontoc.

Before a girl puts on her *lu-fîd'*, or woven bark-fiber skirt, at about eight or ten years of age, she at times wears simply the narrow girdle, later worn to hold up the skirt. The woman's skirt is both short and narrow (see plate xxxii, 2). It usually extends from below the navel to near the knees; it opens on the side, and is frequently so scant and narrow that one leg is exposed as the person walks, the only part of the body covered on that side being under the girdle or *wâ'-kis* — a woven band about four inches wide passing twice around the body. The woman sometimes wears the braided bejuco girdle, *i-kit'*, worn by the men (see woman on right in plate xxxi, 1).

The skirt or *lu-fîd'*, and the girdle or *wâ'-kis* are the extent of woman's ordinary clothing. For some months after the mother gives birth to a child she wears an extra girdle wrapped tightly about her, over which the skirt is worn as usual. During the last few weeks of pregnancy the woman may leave off her skirt entirely, wearing simply her blanket over one shoulder and about her body. Women wear breech-cloths during menses.

During the period when the water-soaked soil of the sementera is turned for transplanting rice, the women engaged in such labor generally lay aside their skirts. Sometimes they retain a girdle and tuck an apron of camote leaves or of weeds under it before and behind (see plate xxxi, 1, 2). I have frequently come upon women entirely naked climbing up and down the steep stone terrace walls of their sementeras while weeding them, and also at the clay pits where Samoki women get their earth for making pottery. In May, 1903, it rained hard every afternoon for two or three hours in Bontoc pueblo, and at such times the women when out of doors uniformly removed their clothing. They worked in



IGOROT LOIN COVERINGS

1, Camote-vine aprons of soil turners. 2, Man and girl wearing leaf aprons while turning the soil. 3, The lengthening skirt.
(Photo by Martin. Courtesy of the Ethnological Survey for the Philippine Islands.)

the fields and went therefrom nude to their dwellings, wearing on their heads while in the trail either their long basket-work rain protector or a head-covering of camote vines — under which reposed their skirts in an effort to keep them dry. Sometimes while passing our house en route from the field to the pueblo, the women wore the girdle with its camote-vine apron, called *pay-pay*. Often no girdle was worn, but the women held a small bunch of leaves against the body in lieu of an attached apron; sometimes, however, their hands were occupied with their burdens — and their nudity seemed not to trouble them in the least.

The women remove their skirts, they say, because they usually possess only one at a time, and they prefer to travel naked in the rain and while working in the wet sementeras rather than sit in a wet skirt when they reach home.

Few women in the Bontoc area wear jackets or waists. Those to the west, toward the province of Lepanto, frequently wear short ones, open in front without fastening, and having quarter sleeves. Those women also wear somewhat longer skirts than do the Bontoc women.

In Agawa and near-by pueblos to the west, and in Barlig and vicinity to the east, the women make and wear flayed bark jackets and skirts. From Barlig bark jackets and skirts for women come in trade to Tulubin; they are not simply sheets of bark, but the bark is strengthened by a coarse reinforcement of a warp sewed or quilted in.

Many of the woman's skirts and girdles woven west of Bontoc pueblo are made also of the Ilokano cotton. The skirts and girdles of Bontoc pueblo and those found commonly eastward are entirely of bark production. Four varieties of plants yield the threads; the inner bark is gathered and then spun or twisted on the naked thigh under the palm of the hand. All weaving in Igorot-land is done by the woman with the simplest kind of loom, such as is scattered the world over among primitive people.

ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF CLOTHING

The reason for the Igorot's adoption of the scant clothing which he wears does not appear in any of the five motives which are com-

monly assigned for the adoption of clothing, namely, need for clothing as a protection against climatic conditions; desire for "dress" or decoration; sense of shame; desire to attract curiosity by concealing a part of the body; and imitation of more cultured peoples.

In regard to the adoption of clothing as a protection against the climate, it must be noted that none of the man's clothing affords any protection whatever; that the skirt of the woman is very scanty, covering only a small part of the person, and that not the sensitive lungs or stomach—over which the blanket is worn as clothing. It barely covers the abdomen, the buttocks, and, imperfectly, the thighs. In the heavy rains the wearer comes far short of using her skirt as clothing—she removes it to keep it dry.

The clothing certainly was not adopted for esthetic reasons, since all of their own manufacture is uniformly of as lifeless and dirty a color as any cloth ever invented. Now and then a few threads of a very dull brown are woven into the skirt and girdle, but they are scarcely noticeable.

Even to-day the Bontoc men and women exhibit no shame before their fellow Igorot when, while at work in the *sementeras*, they remove their clothing to keep it clean or dry. At no time does the woman manifest shame regarding her always naked breast. As a psychological phenomenon shame induced by nakedness is impossible to a naked folk who see only naked people. The sense of shame alone never caused a primitive people to adopt its first form of covering for the person.

There are common social facts standing abruptly in the face of the theory that the clothing was adopted to create sexual feeling. Girls to-day effect the skirt before puberty. The Igorot do not notice the nudity of their children, and the skirt is worn by the girl before there is any natural manifestation of womanhood. All unmarried women and men, and the majority of married ones, pull out the pelvic hair, and the reason assigned by them is that they do it in order that they will not be noticeable when they work or travel naked; they wish to appear like the children, they say. Again in this connection we must note the extraordinary social institution, the *o'-lâg* (this is a trial-marriage institution), with its free-



CLOTHING OF IGOROT WOMEN

1, Women wearing the blanket in the dance. 2, The woman's skirt.

(Photo by Martin. Courtesy of the Ethnological Survey for the Philippine Islands)

dom and liberty of intimacy between the sexes. In reality there appears to be little need for women in Bontoc to allure men through their curiosity.

It does not seem probable that the clothing is commonly an imitation of other people, as of the Christian Ilokano. It is of Bontoc manufacture; all the plants yielding the bark from which the thread is spun are in the Bontoc area — nothing is borrowed, apparently. To-day the Bontoc women prefer their own skirts to those of cotton they are able to buy from the pueblos to the west; and the Bontoc skirt is widespread throughout the area — of which it seems to be a natural product. Of course, the present woven bark skirt was very probably everywhere preceded by the skirt of flayed bark which is still worn in some pueblos of the area.

The use of the girdle around a man's waist as a means of attaching to the otherwise naked person some light but considerable possession would be very natural. A stick pushed through under the girdle, just as the battle-ax is carried to-day, is secure; it can hardly work out unnoticed. I believe the girdle was first worn to secure some such possession. Afterward the permanency of the girdle ensued, not only as a means of carrying possessions, but because of the feeling of strength it is commonly believed to give. It was worn from the response — universal among men who lift burdens, who go long distances afoot, and who frequently miss a meal — to girt up one's loins. The Igorot says he wears the girdle because it makes him stronger, and with it he can travel faster and farther.

When small things were needed to be borne about constantly, the bag (say, first, the bladder of a slain animal) would come into service. It could readily be carried tucked under the girdle; a good place to put it is directly in front — just where the Bontoc man usually carries his; at either side it is in the way of the hands and arms, and would be more readily lost by being pulled off in the forest; at the back it is not so accessible. The bag undoubtedly preceded the breech-cloth, since to-day many of the old men in the culture area wear nothing except the girdle and the bag hanging in front of the body, and the breech-cloth is worn more often as an apron than as a breech-cloth. The partial hiding of a man's genitals

by the bag-pocket would in time become conventional, hence the use of the breech-cloth as an apron, since it is generally no more of a covering than is the bag. From the partial covering to the more complete covering with the breech-cloth, worn as a breech-cloth, is a natural step; and doubtless contact with the Spaniards in Bontoc and with others wearing more clothing than a scanty apron had to do with this completer covering.

From what the little basket-work hat developed can not be said; perhaps it came from a simple string around the head to hold the hair from falling. It is worn entirely by long-haired men. The long hair of the Bontoc man is not only bound close to his head by the *suk'-lâng*, but the long ends are generally tucked under and into the hat, thus further confining it. The short-haired men at the western side of the area use the head-band to confine the hair which otherwise would be constantly in the face, as it is cut six or eight inches long. The short-haired man of the Quiangan area, with his "mushroom" hair-cut, wears neither hat nor head-band, since his hair is not long enough to disturb him.

It is believed the *suk'-lâng* may have developed as a pocket from the narrow head-band, since the man's pipe is invariably put away in the *suk'-lâng*, as also are his tobacco and matches, if he has them. The man who wears the head-band habitually tucks his pipe under it also, as he sometimes does small amounts of tobacco, but it offers little space for such effects.

The decoration of the *suk'-lâng* with dog's teeth, pearl shell from the sea coast, human hair, army buttons, brass wire, etc., and the red, yellow, brown, and black colors employed in its weaving, is an after-development. The typical hat of Bontoc pueblo is uncolored and unadorned, except that it often has two or three small brass-wire rings attached to the outer surface.

The woman's rain-protector had its origin in utility as a clothing; so, also, probably the blanket owes its origin to the need for clothing.

The jacket worn west of Bontoc pueblo is believed to have been adopted largely in imitation of other people of a higher culture. Where it is worn among the Igorot to-day in the Bontoc area there is an utter absence of shame regarding the exposure of the breasts.



TAGALOG WOMEN WEARING THE TAP'IS

(Photo by Martin. Courtesy of the Ethnological Survey for the Philippine Islands)

In some Igorot sections it may have originated independently as a clothing, but there is no evidence that it originated either in response to a feeling of shame or from a desire to attract the attention of men.

The skirt and the girdle are woman's most constant clothing. There is an explanation which offers a reason why the Bontoc woman might have adopted her skirt; it is a reason which seems to me not at all improbable; if it applies there, it may elsewhere.

To-day the woman during menses wears a breech-cloth; during the time she wears it she will not remove her skirt either to keep it clean or dry. If at any time, even at the ford across the river, where both sexes uncover themselves as a matter of course, men should see women wearing only the breech-cloth, they would ridicule them, consequently women are sensitive about exposing themselves with it. They say the breech-cloth is worn for cleanliness. May it not have been worn periodically for cleanliness before the skirt was worn? If so, then, as now, man's attention would have been drawn to the woman at a time when, almost universally, primitive people consider their women unclean and unattractive. Inasmuch as no tabu is placed on woman by the Bontoc Igorot at these periods of her life (she works, eats, and sleeps as usual), the fact of her condition, whether with or without the breech-cloth, would be observed by her usual companions. As it is to-day, the skirt keeps her secret by hiding the breech-cloth.

A reason for the skirt, then, that seems to harmonize with all the facts and conditions of its use, and the use of the breech-cloth, is that it was adopted to hide an embarrassing condition after the breech-cloth was worn periodically for the sake of personal cleanliness.

The Christianized Tagalog woman of Manila to-day wears a "*tap'-is*" — a dark colored, generally black, skirt, open at the side or in front, extending from the waist to below the knees (see plate xxxiii). The "*tap'-is*" is worn over her other skirt or skirts; it is her outer garment, and to-day a woman is almost never seen on the street without it. She seldom avails herself of the breech-cloth during menstruation, but wears instead the dark-colored "*tap'-is*" for the avowed purpose of concealing any possible obtrusive evidence of periodicity. This "*tap'-is*," so named, is worn by the Christianized Tagalog, Ilokano, and Bikol women of Luzon, as well

as elsewhere in the archipelago by some other Christian women. Among the Ilokano women of the Ilokos provinces it is frequently the only nether garment worn. The Igorot of Ilokos Sur and of Lepanto-Bontoc provinces, and the Tinguian, at least of the province of Ilokos Sur, wear the *tap'-is* as the sole nether garment. And the *lu'-fid*, the Bontoc skirt, is the primitive "*tap'-is*"; it is simply considerably less ample than the one worn in Manila, both in length and breadth. It is also less ample than the *tap'-is* of the Tinguian and the Lepanto Igorot, who have doubtless been influenced by the longer garment of the neighboring Ilokano. In fact, the Bontoc skirt is now also gradually lengthening, through the same influence, though still woven of the same bark fiber and still the product of Bontoc home industry. The lengthening skirt is shown in plate xxxi, 3.

Here, then, we have the *tap'-is* — a nether garment — worn by the women of the primitive Malayan stock of the archipelago. With some it is the only nether garment worn, with others it has survived for three centuries even after the wearer dons beneath it several European garments, as white underskirts and an overskirt. It survived because, as the Tagalog says, it has to-day a specific function — one which, it is maintained, was the cause of its adoption by the primitive Malayan woman. It is doubtless also worn to-day by some Tagalog women chiefly because it is customary; this would inevitably be true if its use was persisted in after several nether garments were commonly worn.

In conclusion, it is believed the first clothing of the Bontoc area had its origin in a utility other than protection against the climate; it had its origin outside the desire for "dress," outside the sense of shame, or the desire to attract attention to sex life, and it did not originate in imitation. The man's clothing originated in utility — a convenience for carrying with him, attached to his body, constantly desired possessions. The woman's clothing originated because of a monthly condition.

Some time in the development of primitive woman the fact of menstruation first caused some of them to clothe their bodies. In the Philippine archipelago alone some women seem to have answered that demand by the use of the breech-cloth, others by the apron, others by the pantaloons, and still others by use of the skirt.